Canadian Centre
for Occupational
Health and Safety

Centre canadien
d'hygiène et de
sécurité au travail

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

A Workshop

P90-10E

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A Workshop

Hamilton, Ontario
November 29 and 30, 1989

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

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OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

A WORKSHOP

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CCOHS CCHST

Canadian Centre
for Occupational Health and Safety

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

A Workshop

Wednesday, November 29 and Thursday, November 30, 1989
Hamilton Convention Centre, Hamilton, Ontario

Wednesday, November 29, 1989

8:15 am — REGISTRATION AND COFFEE - Webster Room Foyer, 3rd Floor

9:00 am — **Welcome and Introduction to the Workshop** - Webster B & C
Lillian Vine, Manager, Committees and Workshops
Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety

9:15 am — **Panel Discussion**

A View From One Labour Union
Christian Millet, Director of Health and Safety
Canadian Telephone Employees Association

A View From One Occupation
Steve Bottaro, Employee Assistance Program
Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police

A View From Management
Greg Hogan, Manager, Industrial Relations
Polysar Limited

Medical/Psychological Aspects
André Arsenault, Physician
Montreal Heart Institute

Open Discussion

10:30 am — BREAK - Webster Room Foyer

10:45 am **Workshop #1 - Workplace Stress and Illness**

a) How would you define "stress" ("chronic stress," "positive/negative stress")?
b) How does stress affect workers?
c) What is the relationship between stress and illness?
d) How does worker stress affect the workplace?

12 noon LUNCH - Webster A

1:00 pm **Workshop #2 - Work Environment**

a) Iow does the control a worker has over the job affect stress level?
b) Electronic monitoring of work performance is becoming widespread in business as a means of streamlining procedures and increasing productivity. How does this affect workers?
c) How do hazards and dangerous work situations contribute to stress? Does knowledge about these situations increase or decrease stress?

2:00 pm **Workshop #3 - Job Design**

a) "Technostress" -- What is the relationship between job automation and stress?
b) How does work organization affect stress?
c) How does change in work organization bring about stress?
d) What is the relation between job design and stress?
e) How can job design be used to reduce stress levels?

3:00 pm BREAK - Webster Room Foyer

3:15 pm **Workshop #4 - Training and Counselling**

a) What training is needed for occupational health and safety personnel to recognize signs of stress? for supervisory staff? for workers?
b) How can you monitor how workers are handling stress on the job?
c) What role is there for EAPs and employee counselling? stress management programs?
d) How effective are they?
e) What other strategies might be useful?

4:00 pm **Workshop #5 - Compensation**

a) To what degree are stress-related illnesses compensable? To what degree should they be?
b) What criteria should be used to measure the role of stress in disabling conditions?
c) How can workplace stress be differentiated and separated from day-to-day stress?
d) How can the privacy of the worker be protected in determining causes of stress?

5:30 pm CASH BAR - Webster A

6:00 pm DINNER - Webster A

Thursday November 30, 1989

8:30 am COFFEE - Webster Room Foyer

9:00 am **Workshop #6 - Homogeneous Groups**

Consideration of solutions
Preparation of report

10:30 am BREAK - Webster Room Foyer

10:45 am **Plenary Session - Webster B & C**

Reports of Labour, Management, Professionals and Government
Recommendations from the Workshop

12 noon **Close of Workshop**

SUMMARY

Work-related stress is increasingly being recognized even for workers' compensation. Many factors may contribute to it: technological change, job displacement, increasing expectations for productivity, inappropriate work organization. The recognition of stress may be influenced by societal expectations and preconceptions.

In response to the concerns on occupational stress, CCOHS held a workshop in Hamilton. The opening panel discussion brought the participants one union's view from Christian Millet of the Canadian Telephone Employees' Association, a view from management in one industry from Greg Hogan of Polysar Limited, a presentation on the medical/psychological aspects of stress (extrinsic and intrinsic) from Dr André Arsenault of the Montreal Heart Institute and the experience of one high-risk occupation--police work--from Steve Bottaro (Employee Assistance Program) and Sgt Glenn MacNaughton from the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police.

After the presentations and discussions, the participants met in small, mixed work groups to discuss such questions as Workplace Stress and Illness, Work Environment, Job Design, Training and Counselling, and Compensation. Homogeneous work groups--labour, management and government/professionals--then met to define their own conclusions and recommendations. The final plenary session received the reports of each of these groups. There was so much common ground that the report of management could easily have been that of labour! The three groups concluded that job-related stress can be reduced if workers have more control over their work and participate in the design of their jobs and their work environments; stress-related illnesses, if they can be shown to be related to work, should be compensable; stress can be related to occupational illness and results in absenteeism, low morale, poor product quality, but stress is only one of several factors that cause disease.

There was also agreement that full worker knowledge of the work environment--including hazardous conditions--can reduce stress. "A little bit of knowledge" could have the opposite effect. Increased worker awareness without the tools to cope with the situation can be more stressful than helpful.

"Techno-stress," the result of automation, can cause stress--mainly because it is seen as a threat to jobs. But it can also reduce job hazards and thus stress. Labour wanted workers to have control over the work process through negotiated improvements, for example, on shift patterns, the pace of production. The participation of workers in job design was frequently mentioned.

In Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) there tends to be an emphasis on the results of stress rather than on stress itself and its causes. Participants agreed emphasis should be on stress prevention rather than on stress management. Respect for worker privacy should be intrinsic to an EAP. Some EAPs are open to the families of workers; probably all should be.

The consensus was that illness related to job stress should be compensated. But there were nuances in determining job-related stress. Management said specific criteria have to be developed by the medical profession to differentiate between personal and

job-related stress. Labour, calling for a policy to make work-related stress compensable, said that only one criterion should apply for determining compensation--a "worker having a disabling condition that can be substantiated to be related to the workplace." The professionals/government group said that whether or not compensation is provided should depend on criteria arrived at by consensus among workers, management, the scientific community, and government. A list of jobs and outcomes should be developed and aimed at relieving the worker of the burden of proof. The list should be evaluated periodically.

INTRODUCTION

Lillian Vine

I am Lillian Vine, Manager of Workshops and Conferences at the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.

CCOHS workshops started 3 1/2 years ago to facilitate the participation of stakeholders in occupational health and safety in discussions of the social policy issues of occupational health and safety. In these discussions they, as I know you will, uncovered common ground, identified areas where they could agree and those needing further discussion, and proposed a way forward.

Stress is an important issue to discuss because there is insecurity in the workplace--automation is being introduced and that makes people feel uneasy; lifestyles are changing, and the pressure of the workplace is felt in the home, and the pressure of the home is felt in the workplace; for these and many other reasons, employee assistance programs are being established, some more successful than others.

Our workshops bring together a panel of presenters representative of the stakeholders in occupational health and safety to briefly describe their points of view, their experience, and their knowledge. This forms a useful background for your discussions.

The agenda is put together by a small planning committee made up of the people who requested the workshop, and we try to make it at least bipartite. In this case one requester was Christian Millet, who is one of our panelists today speaking for labour, and the other was a manager in a government department; unfortunately she cannot be here today.

After the panel presentations, you will go into small workgroup sessions. In those group sessions you will discuss all the questions on the agenda. We have put the groups together to provide a good mix of labour, management, professionals, governments and others.

Tomorrow you will meet in homogenous groups to review those things which you discuss today and come up with conclusions. Each homogeneous group will choose a rapporteur who will report to the final plenary session. The work group leaders are registrants of the workshop whom I asked to take on this additional work, and I thank them for agreeing. We produce a proceedings approximately three months after the event which consists of a summary, the panel presentations and discussions, and the reports of the homogeneous groups.

PANEL DISCUSSION

A View From One Labour Union
Christian Millet
Canadian Telephone Employees Association

A View From One Occupation
Steve Bottaro, EAP
Glenn MacNaughton
Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police

A View From Management
Greg Hogan
Polysar Limited

Medical/Psychological Aspects
André Arsenault
Montreal Heart Institute

Lillian Vine

Our first speaker is Christian Millet. He will be speaking from a union perspective.

Christian holds a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry from the Université de Montréal, a master's degree in Occupational Health and Safety from McMaster University in Hamilton, and a certificate in Industrial Toxicology from Wayne State University in Michigan, U.S.

He worked as a research assistant in the Department of Occupational Medicine and Environmental Health at the Université de Montréal and as a Project Officer in Technical Services at the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. He is now the Director of Occupational Health and Safety for the Canadian Telephone Employees Association. He has also been an instructor at Mohawk College in Hamilton since 1986 where he teaches in the Occupational Health and Safety certificate program. He has written or coauthored several publications. In his position with the Canadian Telephone Employees Association, Christian represents approximately 20,000 telecommunications workers in all matters regarding occupational health and safety. He is the co-chairman of the Joint Committee on Occupational Health and Safety of Bell Canada/Canadian Telephone Employees Association and is co-directing a study on stress in office workers.

Christian Millet

I am an industrial toxicologist by training. After spending two years representing approximately 20,000 office workers employed in telecommunications, I have learned a lot about stress. I had to learn on the job, as it were; I had to improvise and find out for myself. This helped me to develop new means of communication in an attempt to reduce the stress of the office workers I represent. I was also able to develop labour relations techniques because stress is caused, first of all, by a lack of understanding of the problem. Generally, when an employee (90% of the 20,000 or so people we represent are women) approaches management to discuss a stress problem, the first thing she faces is disbelief on the part of the manager, who does not know how to handle the problem.

Stress is an element of our daily life which enables us to do our work and simply to function both on and off the job. However, we need periods of relaxation between two periods of stress because to some extent stress is tiring. Let me give you an example: When you drive to work you may spend an hour in a traffic jam, a stressful situation, to say the least. You get to the office, where a problem awaits you. You are already stressed and you are faced with a problem to solve "ASAP." Perhaps it would be good to "stand back" mentally, relax, and breathe deeply for a few minutes to be able to face the work problem more effectively. But it is often difficult to take this little break because of productivity requirements which make a period of relaxation appear to be a waste of time; in my opinion, a break would constitute a saving of time because it would give a positive attitude.

In this type of situation our body is subject to continual tension which may eventually cause psychological or physical harm. Stress is known to cause psychosomatic problems such as headaches, insomnia, or loss of appetite. In addition, some studies have shown that stress can increase the incidence of heart disease.

In telecommunications, in Customer Service, stress or agents causing stress can generally be divided into two main categories: technostress (stress caused by the introduction of new technology) and stress related to electronic monitoring of productivity.

As for many problems in health and safety, stress, whether it be technostress or stress related to electronic monitoring, can be approached in two ways: from a labour relations point of view (that is, how to present the problem to management) and from the point of view of industrial hygiene and occupational health (that is, how to change the work environment to alleviate, reduce or eliminate stress).

In my opinion the first aspect which should be addressed is labour relations because the employees face a skeptical management. I attribute this reaction, which really is typical, to the fact that, too often, stress is associated more with personal than with work-related factors. But even though personal situations do cause stress, employees should never be exposed as well to excessive and harmful levels of stress at work. A skeptical reaction by management results from a lack of understanding of the problem and thus of the solutions.

Once management acknowledges that stress may be work-related, it is faced with the difficult task of developing solutions that will reduce or eliminate stress without affecting productivity. There is a conflict between requesting a lower volume of work from employees to reduce stress, and the need for productivity. In our particular case (customer demand), we must meet certain standards that cannot decrease.

There are ways to significantly reduce stress levels without affecting productivity. One solution I would like to suggest is to try to establish communication between management and employees. Management knows the productivity goals, and the type of work that has to be done; the employees are familiar with the work itself and know what elements of the work may cause stress. In my opinion, if the two parties do not talk to each other there is no way of resolving the problem.

Acknowledgment of the problem by management is the first step towards reducing stress in the workplace. But once communication has been established, what is to be done next? At this point, I would like to introduce the concept of "job design." This concept is very important when we deal with subjects such as stress and ergonomics because complete job integration (including the physical and psychological aspects) is probably the only effective means of solving the problem of stress and its effects on health.

Returning now to the two factors I mentioned earlier (technostress and electronic monitoring of productivity), we must deal with each separately. Technostress is a form of stress created by the introduction of new technologies. This problem is particularly important when we consider office jobs. During the last 10 years, offices have been invaded by computers and visual display terminals (VDTs).

Several aspects of the introduction of new technologies may cause a high level of stress in employees. For example, technology may cause some loss of jobs or, at least, staff redeployment. This would mean training or retraining clerical workers. In a population such as the one I represent, a relatively stable population with, on average over 10 years of service, the employees are worried about learning new techniques.

The third element which may cause stress is simply an element of fear: Will these machines cause health effects? It is not our intention here to reopen the debate on the reproductive effects caused by cathode screens--that is not the goal of this workshop (perhaps of another one).

In the case of technostress, too, the consultation process should function so as to reduce or eliminate stress. This consultation process can be used to train and inform the employees and to obtain their feedback: How do they see this technological change? What can management do to help them adjust? There is a section in the Canada Labour Code dealing with the subject of the introduction of new technologies by means of a simple process of consultation between the company and the employees' negotiating unit. For our part, the Canadian Telephone Employees Association has negotiated a clause in its collective agreement which provides for a consultation process when new technologies are introduced.

Contact with the clientele may also cause stress: When you have a problem with your telephone, for example, you call the telephone company and are probably unpleasant to the person who answers. This person is not at fault, but s/he answers the telephone and is a representative of the company.

In the case presented earlier, one of the means of "monitoring productivity" is to use a computer (or software) which records employee performance. Examples of these measurements are the automatic recording of the number of minutes or seconds spent with the client, or the number of calls per unit of time; in the case of a data entry clerk, the machine may automatically record the number of characters (keystrokes) per unit of time. These measurements are intended to ensure maximum productivity while ensuring quality service. And this is where we start to see problems.

There is a conflict between the employees' desire to serve the clientele as well as possible, and pressure on the part of management for them to do more work or to provide more service to customers. This duality of objectives is an element of stress that has been very precisely identified in customer service groups.

There is nothing wrong with electronic monitoring as such. Many studies have been conducted on the effects of this method. As recently as two months ago, at an international conference on work with display units held in Montréal, an entire afternoon was spent discussing the problem of electronic monitoring.

In general terms, the consensus that came out of this discussion was that electronic monitoring as a measure of individual performance causes a lot of stress and negative reaction by employees. However, if this measurement of performance is used collectively, for a group of employees, the gains in productivity could be much higher, with the group effect counterbalancing the negative effect of being electronically monitored. It is interesting to note that some European countries have laws stipulating that electronic monitoring not be used for individual evaluation, but only for group evaluation. There is a similar law currently before the United States Congress.

Obviously, this change of philosophy or approach with regard to staff evaluation does not occur from one day to the next. Here again the consultation process should help to solve the problems because the company knows its objectives and the employees know their work.

Our union's approach to stress in the workplace is that we do not think there are any ways stress can be solved by management alone or through the confrontational situation of a grievance procedure. Stress has to be solved through honest consultation, with both parties talking to each other.

Once this communication process has been established, we feel the only way to do some good in the stress issue is to evaluate the job as a whole, not only the physical aspects, not only the environmental aspects and not only the tasks themselves but everything together. Let us try to put ergonomics, the job environment and the actual tasks together and look at these as an integrated field, what we call job design.

Lillian Vine

Inherent in some occupations is a particularly high degree of stress. We found a course at Mohawk Community College in Hamilton given by Steve Bottaro for police officers to deal with stress. We thought that police work would be an excellent example of an occupation subjected to many unusual stresses. I am pleased that Steve agreed to speak; sharing the platform with him is Glenn MacNaughton of the Hamilton Wentworth Police Force.

Steve Bottaro is Director of the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police Department's Employee Assistance Program. He is also a Director of the Ontario Law Enforcement Stress Association. For five years he was a Senior Social Worker in Psychology at Owen Sound Grey Bruce Regional Medical Health Centre. He spent three years as a Classification Officer for the Ontario Ministry of Corrections and has several years' experience in child welfare, marital and family therapy. He is a graduate of the University of Western Ontario; he did his graduate work at the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto and took advanced courses at Harvard University in Boston, Massachusetts, in Personality Disorders.

Speaking first is Glenn MacNaughton. Glenn is a Hamilton native, a graduate of McMaster University with an honours Bachelor's degree in Physical Education and a graduate of Queen's University, where he obtained his Bachelor of Education, Ontario Teaching Certificate. He is now in the process of completing the Police Administration Certificate Program at McMaster University.

He is a ten-year member of the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police Force as a uniform foot patrol, uniform mobile patrol, Field Training Officer, and a member of the Special Plain Clothes Unit. Glenn was recently promoted to the rank of Sergeant. He is in charge of the Planning and Research Branch and is responsible for creating force procedures and policies, dealing with such matters as infectious disease control, smoking in the workplace, and employee assistance programs. He is now conducting an in-service training seminar for senior constables on critical incident stress.

Glenn will talk about some of the factors which make police work particularly stressful, and Steve will talk about the Hamilton-Wentworth Police Force's Employee Assistance Program and how it works.

Glenn MacNaughton

The risks of police work can be compared to those of many other types of work which would generally be classified as emergency response work--such as that of fire fighters and ambulance attendants.

The stress can be broken down into four elements--physical stress, mental stress, emotional stress, and environmental stress. All have short-term and long-term effects.

Physical stress can be the fear of, as well as the actual physical injury during direct confrontations with people and animals. Weapons could be involved in such activities as making arrests, restoring order, mini-riots, even Grey Cup celebrations. Physical stress can also be the body's reaction to the whole work environment.

This stress can be cumulative over years, weeks, days. Like athletes who suffer one injury after another, officers, by the tenth year, may become burned out physically and mentally.

Accidental injuries can have devastating effects. Being hit at the scene of an accident, electrocutions, coming in contact with communicable diseases such as AIDS, hepatitis, tuberculosis can psychologically render one almost unemployable.

From a mental or cognitive standpoint, the longer one is on the job, the more change takes place in one's thinking processes. In dealing with the public, it is important to try to maintain a neutral, unbiased point of view, to use a common-sense approach and still maintain street-wise faculties. This can happen over a long period or can be triggered by one critical incident; we call this critical incident stress. Psychological changes can lead to police officers becoming unfeeling and unemotional and thus putting up barriers between them and this work, and even their loved ones.

Particularly important for emergency response workers is to retain their sense of humour.

There is the stress of the roller coaster effect--the high of an intense situation such as a high-speed pursuit followed by the low of some hours of rattling doorknobs and trying to stay awake--you are on a low, you are on a high, back and forth. These highs and lows happen within a shift, or within a week, or within a year and can have very devastating effects emotionally.

Stress levels are affected by career development such as lateral transfers, promotions--or the lack of them. That is one place where management is taking some strides forward.

From an environmental point of view several things which have been mentioned also affect police officers, one being computerization. This is not so much for fear of loss of jobs but the human fear of dealing with a non-human entity, a machine.

Not unique to police work, but an important factor is shift work, sleep disruption, and eating-pattern disruption--you may be working eight-hour shifts, ten-hour shifts, or twelve-hour shifts; you may be working seven to seven, or eight to eight, or four in the afternoon to four in the morning.

One very important factor in stress is negative contact and negative feedback; being involved with the police in any way is hardly an experience people look forward to. Poor media coverage and sensational journalism can have a very big effect.

Even the economy affects a police officer's job. When the country was in an economic recession, we had more calls for service, for example, more tense domestic situations, which mean a higher work load putting more stress on each officer, each shift, each day.

Another environmental stress is legislative changes. A change of any sort can be disruptive; when there is constant change in legislation some fall behind and never catch up.

All these factors add up to very high stress levels. Some stress is self-generated; some of it is put upon us by others (media, management, or the public); or is simply the nature of police work.

The results of stress, long-term and short-term, can be seen as increased injuries on duty, sick time off, turnover rate, suicides, premature death, substance abuse, divorce, domestic violence--as well as declining work performance.

One of the problems is, I believe, the lack of recognition of stress-related diseases. An officer was recently involved in a very gruesome homicide. He worked so hard on the case that he had a physical breakdown. But his Workers' Compensation claim was disallowed. He just had to take sick time off his sick leave bank. Lack of compensation is one problem that affects a lot of workers in different occupations.

What can we do about occupational stress? You are never going to eliminate it; you can only hope to control it. What I teach is that there are ways you can control it--through education and training, and through experience. Being forewarned is being forearmed; if s/he knows what is likely to happen, especially in critical incident situations such as shootings, an officer can be made aware of the emotions s/he will be going through, then it is possible to get through the problem instead of breaking down under its weight.

Stephen Bottaro

The Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police Employees Assistance Program is different from some of the industrial EAPs you may be familiar with. The unique role of police officers makes their stresses different from those experienced by most other workers; they must deal with life and death situations as well as day-to-day stresses.

Our program has been operating since 1988 and is designed to help civilian and police officers and their families--children, brothers, sisters, and so on. It is a confidential program. The management of the police department does not request or require any kind of information about whom I see or why I treat them; they only want to know if they are able to function in their assigned role.

The other aspect of the program is a mandatory one, and this may be more relevant to industrial EAPs. It is designed to help people's performance on the job; if a performance level has deteriorated for whatever reason, the officer is, in some cases, mandatorily referred. I would like to point out that most of the people I see from the police department come to me voluntarily because they know they need assistance.

How does the program work? It is held off-site, which is very important for employee assistance programs. If you are thinking about starting an employee assistance program, it has to be somewhere other than the place of employment, for one obvious reason--no one is going to come to the personnel department and let everyone know that s/he has problems.

How do the people access it? They phone me at my number, which has been posted throughout the department; we also had a mailing that went out to all the homes. They phone and they get me directly, or they get my answering service and I respond.

If it is a critical incident or an emergency situation, I am paged and I respond immediately. If they cannot get me then they get a peer counsellor.

Peer resource counsellors are another important aspect of employee assistance programs, especially within law enforcement. Research indicates that law enforcement officers feel more comfortable talking to fellow officers than to outside professionals. That is one of the reasons why police programs have historically been in-house programs. The peer resource people are men and women on the force, civilian as well as police officers, and they are there as friendly visitors and referral agents.

The EAP program in the police department is both proactive and responsive. It is two-fold because we react to an employee's problem when we know there is one, but we also act proactively through education programs on stress management, which I conduct as part of the force's training programs. We also hold training seminars for recruits as they come into the job, even before they have gone to police college. Seminars are also given to wives and families through the police association in an attempt to get the officers and their wives to see and hear about methods of dealing with job stress or family issues.

Law enforcement, generally speaking, is a very, very difficult occupation. Citizens may only come in contact with a police officer when they have done something wrong and do not always see police officers in a positive way. This in itself is a very big stress issue for police personnel. Their unique role is different, but they themselves are just like you and me--they bleed and they cry and they feel all the things that you and I do.

How do we help people with their stress? As a police social worker, the best way I can help an officer is to teach better ways of coping. That is really the only thing that we can do. I do not know what it feels like to walk down an alley at two or three in the morning and have that feeling in the pit of my stomach. We try to relate to that as professionals and try to understand how they visualize their stresses.

Lillian Vine

Greg Hogan, our next speaker, represents management in a Sarnia firm which has been undergoing some serious stresses. He is a graduate of the University of Waterloo, with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science, and he has a chartered accountant designation. He joined Petrosar in 1980 as Manager, Tax Administration, and transferred to Polysar in 1983 as Manager, Tax Administration. In 1985 he transferred to the Sarnia site as Controller and in 1987 he became Manager, Internal Audit. In 1988 he transferred back to Sarnia as Manager, Industrial Relations, the position he still holds.

The department consists of personnel, training, communications and community relations, medical and safety, hygiene and loss control.

I am particularly grateful to Greg because he stepped in with little notice. Thank you very much.

Gregory Hogan

I want to thank you for this opportunity to share some thoughts on stress and what we at Polysar's Sarnia site have been doing about it.

Polysar Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of Nova Corporation of Alberta. During this past year, Polysar has been the subject of a takeover battle that lasted six months. Polysar is an international producer of synthetic rubber, plastics, and petro-chemicals with manufacturing facilities in North America, both Canada and the United States, in Europe, in Belgium and in France. It has sales offices throughout the world--Brazil, Singapore, Japan, Taiwan, Australia and in many European countries.

The Sarnia site is the largest manufacturing complex in the company consisting of four rubber producing units, five petro-chemical units, a steam and power plant, and a research facility. There are approximately 2,000 employees on the site.

One of the first efforts to address employee concerns was the engagement in late 1981 of a private consultant to be available to employees on a confidential basis. This individual worked on his own; office space was made available to him within the plant site in our marketing facility.

The purpose of the position was to provide a confidential, outside resource for Polysar employees and their family members who wanted relatively immediate service toward the resolution of anxiety and stress which resulted from personal problems.

Stress was recognized at that time as an important issue to our employees that required attention from the company. The need was probably heightened by a down turn in the economy that saw two down-sizings in one year.

The statistics from the first two years with the consultant indicate that the need for this service was indeed there. In the first full year, 260 cases were identified and 335 were identified in the next year. The cases ranged from marital problems, drug and alcohol abuse to financial problems, depression and anxiety.

Shortly after this program started, our medical department became involved in the education of our employees in a more formal way. Working with the local mental health association, noon hour education programs were set up to help the employees understand the signs and effects of stress and how to deal with it.

From this evolved an on-site education program run directly under the auspices of the medical department. Two of our employees were sent for a week of training. Upon their return they started to do on-site presentations. These have continued up to the present, although today many of the presentations are on a request basis. I might add that we at Polysar have recently put on the presentations for an outside organization.

Two-day stress management workshops have been conducted through our training department. These sessions are conducted twice a year by a consultant. The need for these sessions was identified about four years ago. A small team was established to develop criteria for the workshops. Some of the criteria included support for our existing supervisory training program, a strong emphasis on communication, and the requirement that the consultant have a knowledge of the manufacturing environment.

The benefits of employee awareness were brought home recently by an incident that involved the work group of one of our employees. This particular employee experienced a tragic accident when one of his children was involved in a train accident that left him crippled. A great deal of support was generated in the community for the family. But the work group realized that they were going to have to face the father when he returned to work and they were not sure how to handle it. Thankfully, they approached our nursing staff for help and we were able to provide them a counsellor to help them address their feelings and their approach.

The consultant was retained until early 1988. At about that time a committee of hourly and salaried employees was put together to investigate the establishment of a formal Employee Assistance Program. The committee brought forward a recommendation for such a program earlier this fall, and we have just concluded an agreement with a service provider, and are in the process of implementation. The service provider is located off-site, it is a confidential service, and there is no direct relationship to the company other than some statistical data.

During the interim period we have had an ad hoc arrangement to cover any employee problems. Though this arrangement provided a service, it was not acceptable from the company's view point. We were not able to gather any statistics, and we did not have any central control over the providers.

In the process of developing our EAP, the committee that worked on the program spent a considerable amount of time reviewing the various forms that such a program could take. The paramount concerns of the committee were confidentiality and access. On both of these counts they have done an excellent job.

The last year and a half to two years have seen a significant change in Polysar, which has continued to have an impact on Polysar's Sarnia site. In 1987, Polysar's parent company, Polysar Energy and Chemical Corporation, agreed to sell the latex division of Polysar Limited. At the Sarnia site this involved the severance and disposal of a manufacturing facility, and the transfer of a number of employees to the new owner. Shortly after this sale was completed, NOVA started its takeover actions. This was about a six-month process of offerings, manoeuverings and revised offers, until September of 1988 when NOVA gained control.

At the same time the Senior Management of Polysar, which had been located in Sarnia since the company's founding in 1942, was divided with the Polymers Management group moving to Toronto.

In the year since, there have been additional reorganizations that have impacted on the Sarnia site. The latest, two weeks ago, impacted on the rubber division. It saw a restructuring of the business with the result that about 40 people became redundant. Further changes in the petro-chemical division impacting on the Sarnia site are anticipated early in the new year.

The consequence of these events over the past two years has been to raise the anxiety level of many of our employees. They have had concerns about their future with the company. In my own department one particularly concerned group has been in the personnel function. In the Sarnia area there are five personnel groups serving the three manufacturing sites: the Sarnia site, our Corruna operation, Moortown operations, research facility and our downtown office complex. Last week we agreed to meet with our personnel group to have an open and honest dialogue about what was taking place. No promises were made, but the situation as known was conveyed to the department. An opportunity for questions was provided.

Feedback has been that the people appreciated the meeting, and although not all were happy, they did feel better able to get on with their daily routines. Open discussion by Senior Management and supervision during difficult times has been an important part of the company's and the site's efforts to minimize anxiety among the employees. To reinforce this, when we select supervisors one of the key areas that we interview prospective candidates on is their tolerance for stress. The guideline that we use is to try to determine the candidate's stability of performance under pressure, and/or, opposition.

Polysar has recognized stress as a problem that needs to be addressed on both an individual and a group basis. Through formal means such as education, open dialogue and EAP programs, we are trying to answer those needs.

On an informal basis we also try to manage it through an expectation that our supervisors have been properly screened in selection and that they will maintain open dialogue with their staff. This said, we still have much to do in this area.

Lillian Vine

Dr. André Arsenault practices his specialty of nuclear medicine at the Montreal Heart Institute. He is here today thanks to the support of the Institut de recherche en santé et en sécurité du travail du Québec (IRSST), and we thank them very much. Dr. Arsenault obtained his doctorate in medicine from the Université de Montréal in 1967 and was certified as a specialist in nuclear medicine by the Professional Corporation of Physicians of Québec in 1972. From 1972 to 1976 he was assistant professor in the Department of Nuclear Medicine and Radiobiology in the Faculty of Medicine at the Université de Sherbrooke. After working for two years as an Occupational Health and Safety Research Coordinator for Hydro-Québec, he became chief editor of the scientific journal Union Médicale du Canada from 1972 to 1982. From 1982 to 1986 he directed a research team at the IRSST where he coordinated studies on work organization and the safety of workers. Since 1981 he has also been associated with the School of Industrial Relations of the Université de Montréal, and he is a member of the corporation of counsellors in industrial relations. Since 1978 he has been conducting research on stress and work organization in hospitals. In addition to the 38 scientific publications he has written, of which 23 are on this subject, he has also held numerous training sessions on occupational stress. I am very pleased to present Dr. André Arsenault.

André Arsenault

The first part of my presentation will focus on an important distinction to be made between extrinsic and intrinsic stress; the second part will address the relationships between stress and work organization.

So, why is it important to make a clear distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic stress as we defined it? Intrinsic stress is a component of work which is very important, especially in professional activities. It is that component of work which involves frequent contact with customers or patients in the hospital or citizens in the police force. These contacts are difficult for two reasons--1) because the customer is in difficulty, and 2) because you, as a service provider, cannot lose control of the situation. There is a direct analogy between professional and police work: they both refer to a working environment where you are expected to keep control and find a solution to the problem at stake.

This is a problem in itself. If the situation is difficult because the client generates anxiety or irritation, it is even more difficult since you cannot express these emotions; it is part of the job not to express them. Consequently, intrinsic stress makes you retain this emotional energy which you may then have problems managing.

That is an important concept to distinguish from extrinsic stress, which is related to conflicts in work organization. Components like career ambiguity, role ambiguity, role conflicts, lack of autonomy are aspects of the job that you can complain about without feeling guilty, incapable or inadequate if you do.

Moreover, if you do have extrinsic stress problems there are normal channels to express these emotions and dissatisfactions. If you feel irritated or anxious, you can express these feelings in a straightforward manner through such mechanisms as grievances, collective bargaining or direct open discussions of the problem.

Intrinsic stress problems are very different. It is very difficult to enter intrinsic stress considerations into collective bargaining because it is considered an intrinsic part of the role to tolerate a lot of stress.

It is also important to distinguish between these two components of stress because they do not provoke the same reactions.

Extrinsic stress reactions relate to the fight or flight syndrome. You either fight against the source or you run away from it. If you cannot face it directly, you find ways to work around the problem or remove yourself from being exposed to it.

You can remove yourself by being absent from the job or by coming in late or by decreasing your level of awareness and concentration. In some job situations, this is feasible, but in others, it is not. If you are a telephone operator you cannot daydream for more than a fraction of a second because the computer is going to catch you. By contrast, if you are a professional working in a design department you can daydream for months and nobody is going to notice that you are not psychologically there.

Extrinsic stress also generates job dissatisfaction and decreases performance--these are direct connections. Extrinsic stress causes psychological distress symptoms that you can express. If, in a research questionnaire questions were asked about extrinsic stress, workers or managers will say they feel badly about certain things because it is acceptable to do so. But it is not acceptable to say that you feel bad about things which are intrinsically part of your job or of your provision of service.

Prevention of extrinsic stress, or dealing with the sources of extrinsic stress is done by managerial procedures that are standard organizational development and state-of-the-art work organization. It is standard procedure to have clear objectives and through a process of bargaining to arrange or reorganize the work and distribute or redistribute responsibilities to increase assiduity. Doing so can decrease absenteeism, decrease the level of dissatisfaction, increase performance, and decrease psychological and somatic symptoms.

Another problem area of extrinsic stress is that it overflows quite directly and simply into the social support system--colleagues, friends and family. It is easy to talk about stress with them because it is a standard and accepted procedure to do so. But if there is an excess, if all you can talk about are the problems at work, you become a pain for everybody in your support network.

In summary, when you seek help for extrinsic components to the job it is relatively easy. If you want to address the problem or the source of extrinsic stress, it is usually a straightforward organizational procedure of negotiating the components or the definitions of your work.

Intrinsic stress is very different. Intrinsic stress is that component of the job which accounts for your love of that job. You chose that profession and it is a source of intrinsic reward to have trained for it and to be working at that professional activity.

Because of that you will have a tendency, if things get tough or if the resources or the budgets are cut, to compensate of your own volition. You compensate for the lack of resources by increasing your duties, staying later on the job, taking some of your files home and becoming more and more involved in the job. You let the work invade the rest of your life. You decrease your absence levels if you have a lot of intrinsic stress because you feel guilty about not showing up on the job. People who have a lot of intrinsic stress tend to have very low short-term absence and very large absence-day banks.

With intrinsic stress you do not express psychological or somatic complaints. It is part of the job and part of the role to act as if you are not exhausted. You are going to stay on the job and do more because you feel the customer system or the demand of the work is more important than listening to your own body or your own psyche.

We have shown that intrinsic stress is probably a predictor of hypertension and it is also the component that leads to burnout.

In terms of social support, intrinsic stress drains the prime time out of personal and family life because that goes to the work process. The best of your capacity to listen, to help, to be attentive to the needs of others is drained out of you. Your wife, or your companion, or your children, or your friends understand that you cannot listen to

the trivial problems they might want to discuss with you; but they probably wish you were not in that inaccessible state that your "wonderful" profession puts you in. Your personal identity is under attack because it is intrinsically woven into your professional identity.

It is difficult to prevent the damage done by intrinsic stress because it is the stress nobody wants to talk about; it is the stress you are supposed to be in a position to bear. It is very difficult to enter this component into a collective bargaining process. It is a matter of setting priorities at the individual level and at the corporate level.

So, through work organization and decreased budgets the energy can be drained out of family life and social life. It can be extracted through the work process and leave a number of professionals in high probability of burning themselves out; this is a very dramatic outcome.

If you drain your resources through excessive intrinsic stress, you decrease the capacity to provide the services you need as a corporate entity. You can take an individual who would be a very important resource for the corporation over 15 or 20 years and burn that resource out in 3 months. Some corporations die because they drain themselves of their most important resource--human resources--through mismanaged intrinsic stress.

It is important to properly manage intrinsic stress from a corporate point of view, and not allow it to work your worker out of health into burnout. You have to pull in the reins of professionals exposed to intrinsic stress. You have to actively persuade them; you have to say "Hold it, take a holiday. Do not stick around here thinking that you are irreplaceable." It is important from a managerial point of view.

It is also very important from the worker's point of view mainly because social support is important. The work process draining the capacity to relate to significant others at the family level is a very undesirable side effect of intrinsic stress.

If management decreases intrinsic stress, it may decrease assiduity. You may have people who sometimes come to work late, sometimes allow themselves to be absent. You will not see any change in psychological or symptomatic complaints, and you will not see any change in the performance level on a short-term basis. What you will see is a professional capacity extended over a longer period of time. You will have a work force able to stay on the job for 15, 20, 25 years of productivity instead of burning out in a couple of years.

In the second part of my presentation, I want to talk about a model initially developed to deal with the problem of work accidents, at the Institut de Recherche en Santé et Sécurité de Travail du Québec based on a bipartite union/management approach. The model, integrating both components of stress as well as ways to address the situation, separates technical work organization from human work organization and both managers' and workers' perspectives. Referring to the model from the point of view of management, human work organization corresponds to human resource management. Technical organization from a management perspective corresponds to choice of production technologies, techniques and tools.

By contrast, from the worker's perspective, human organization refers to the worker as a human being and is part of the social climate. The worker as a human being is in contrast to the worker as a provider of skilled services and expertise. This is the area of the work force which corresponds to the needs of production and technology, as opposed to the needs of a human resource.

The reason I say this is that usually, when we deal with stress, we deal with the first level--the immediate level of the technical problems related to doing a particular job with a given tool, requiring a certain number of specific skills being used with a certain level of emotional stability and usually evaluated in terms of performance by people connected with human resource management.

Behind this immediate inner circle of preoccupation there can be a larger problem (such as problems in the economy or takeovers) where the whole philosophy of human resource management can be changed from the very top. Or choices can be made that will completely revolutionize work organization through technological change (not just a change in a tool or the way you work with a tool, but a complete change in technology). These macroscopic changes could require not just training, but a complete readjustment of the work force.

From the worker's perspective both components of work organization (human and technical) have similar levels of impact that can result in a general climate that becomes very problematic. Corporate decisions at a macroscopic level are usually made from a technical standpoint without consulting those responsible for human resource management creating very difficult communication problems. The same can also apply at the union level. It is not easy to communicate in a way which considers workers as human beings as well as the providers of skills. When technical changes are made without consideration for the human aspect, one can end up with dramatic destabilizations of the whole system, not only in the area of industrial relations, but also in the larger social environment, which in turn may lead to an overload on social services and on health services.

To sum up, I have tried to show the importance of distinguishing clearly between intrinsic and extrinsic stress. Each one corresponds to a different reality; their effects are different and the measures to use to counter them are also very different. It is relatively easy to correct sources of extrinsic stress; it is very difficult to reduce the quantity of intrinsic stress. At the moment, with technological progress, an economic crisis, and free trade, the amount of intrinsic stress will increase because fewer and fewer people will be asked to do more and more with fewer and fewer means at their disposal. I believe the stress of the '90s and of the next century will be essentially intrinsic stress and that we must set up means of preventing it; or, if it cannot be prevented, of managing it properly.

In terms of work organization, the environment, and consensus between the representatives of workers and managers, means must be found to manage day-to-day work problems. In addition, and even more importantly, we must find mechanisms to foresee the direct effects caused by important changes involving technological transformations, major readjustments of human resources, and complete changes in the political climate of our institutions which will require updating or completely revamping the expertise available on the labour market.

DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS

Lillian Vine

The floor is open for questions and discussion.

Dan O'Connor--Canadian Automobile Workers' Union

Mr Hogan, you mentioned that you had ongoing presentations on stress within your company. Is there a union in your company?

Greg Hogan

Yes, it is the Energy and Chemical Workers' Union.

Dan O'Connor

Did you, or your company, or the human resources department consult with the joint health and safety committee or a safety specialist within the union, or union counsellors before you collated the presentations to be delivered to the employees?

Greg Hogan

The union has been involved in many of the presentations we have done through the joint health and safety committee and sub-committees. In some of the earlier programs there was not as much input from the joint health and safety committee, but with the new EAP program there definitely was. Half the committee was made up of ECWU members who were very active in the whole process of developing the program and even selecting the service provider.

Dan O'Connor

Were some of the presentations' delivery initiated by worker instructors or union instructors at the very beginning? Do they feel, or do you feel, that that type of delivery of presentations is better if it comes from the workers to workers rather than from management to the workers, especially in relation to stress?

Greg Hogan

No. The earlier ones were done in conjunction with the local Mental Health Association who provided the instructors. The in-house programs we developed later were very short and they were delivered by our nursing staff or one of the people from our personnel department. They were given to groups throughout the plant.

We have a very good working relationship with the ECWU. I have had no feedback whether having a union or a management member make the presentation made much difference. What we were trying to address were the employees' concerns at all levels.

André Arsenault

I have been doing training sessions for union representatives as well as for managers. Some specific things have to be dealt with within line management and others within the rank and file. It is very important that union representatives are trained in their specific programs and objectives.

When doing things jointly, it is important that both parties are prepared to enter into the program and define the common objectives.

Steve Bottaro

My experience with employee assistance programs, whether they are for police departments, or for industry, or for hospitals, is that without union support, EAPs do not work.

Al Bieksa - Local 1005, United Steelworkers of America

Mr Millet, you indicated that you represent a union that consists 90 per cent of women yet you failed to make any mention of the role that sexual and racial discrimination may contribute to stress in the workplace.

Do I take that to mean that you do not think that sexual and racial discrimination is a significant contributing factor to stress-related illnesses?

Christian Millet

Harassment based on sex and harassment based on race can be disassociated. Harassment is a factor. What we found is not a large factor compared to the other stresses identified in the job.

At Bell Canada, many managers are women because Bell has a policy to get first line managers through internal promotion rather than external hiring. They have some understanding of the intrinsic problems of gender.

Race is another issue which we have not identified as a stressor. But, we know that there are some harassment problems based on race.

Joe Donaldson - Procter & Gamble Inc

Is there a difference in the percentage of people who take advantage of EAPs between the police department and industry? How large a difference is there, and what would you attribute that difference to?

Steve Bottaro

My statistics for last year show that 580 people, including civilian and sworn officers, their wives, their families, their children, and their extended families came through the program from June 1988 to April 1989, in a department that has roughly 800 sworn officers and another 200 or 300 civilians.

I know the usage in police EAPs is very different from the usage in industry because law enforcement people, I expect, would be more comfortable with in-house programs. Employees in industry may be using a family counselling service which the company does not know about.

Fred Nicholson -Inco Ltd

Mr Hogan, what were the major factors that triggered your firm to initiate a program? How do you measure your effectiveness and what are the conditions that exist now in your organization as a result of the program?

Greg Hogan

As I indicated, we are just beginning. We have not had any statistics of significance for the last two or three years. It will probably be a year or two before we get some good statistics on who is using the program and for what reasons.

In general situations, the key problems will be alcohol-related; there will be some financial problems and some family situations. As to related situations, I cannot comment other than to say that I know of one or two very specific situations where the problem is very much work-related.

Steve Bottaro

Police EAPs are so different because of the nature of the target group. EAPs began in 1985 with Eddie Donovan, a detective sergeant from Boston, Massachusetts. The result of his stressor was alcoholism.

Police officers are talking to me about family dysfunction; relationship breakdown or marital dysfunction with an alcohol component--not necessarily the alcohol causing the marital dysfunction.

There is a big difference between alcohol abuse and alcohol addiction. Alcohol abuse is having five drinks a night, but getting up and going to work the next morning--this is not alcoholism. Then there is the alcoholic who is addicted to alcohol medically; who has an allergy to alcohol and cannot drink.

Police officers tend to be alcohol abusers, not alcohol addicts, because they use alcohol as a way to reduce stress.

I do not keep statistics on problem identification. I keep track of who comes in, who goes out, who may be successful and who may not be. But I do not have a list saying I saw fifteen marriage problems this week and sixteen alcohol problems.

Joyce Nsubuta - Ontario Ministry of Health

All the presentations focussed on the management of occupational stress. I feel that there is no known definition of stress. Has anyone tried to identify and implement stress prevention and minimization strategies?

My second question is has anyone run into legal issues involving occupational stress, and if so, how have they been resolved?

André Arsenault

There are many ways to define stress and usually the way you define it is linked to what you are trying to do. You can define stress by looking at the consequences because this is what you have to deal with--this is tertiary prevention. You try to minimize the damage because you are not in a position to work at the source or the cause.

You can try to define stress at the causal level, in which case you end up with a different definition--this is primary prevention, changing work organization to minimize the effort people have to put out to do their work. This is more difficult and generates confusion.

If you want a generic definition you can say stress is a process which has causes and consequences, and the causes will differ from job to job, and the consequences will differ from one personality type to another. Culture is also a factor because in certain cultures you cannot decompensate or express some problems. In certain areas it is easier to drink than to become hysterical, and in some of the cultures it is easier to become hysterical when stressed because it is accepted in that culture.

In practical terms, when you do tertiary prevention where an employee assistance program is straightforward, it is very simple. But when you try to make it an academic problem it gets very complex because academics enjoy complexity.

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MANAGEMENT, LABOUR, AND PROFESSIONALS

CCOHS/CCHST

Lillian Vine

This topic has engaged your attention very much over the past day and a half; some of the discussions are still going on. I consider that an indication of a successful workshop.

I heard somebody say earlier, "We did not get many answers." You did not; nor did we promise you answers. From the social policy aspect, topics in occupational health and safety do not lend themselves to black and white, yes or no answers. What we hope you gained is an understanding of stress situations, an understanding of how others feel about the situation, what some are doing or attempting to do or would like to do about the situation and whether anybody is making any progress.

Would the rapporteurs for the labour, management and professional homogeneous groups please come to the front. The government group chose to meet with the professionals; I understand they will be reporting as professionals.

REPORT FROM MANAGEMENT

Fred Nicholson - Rapporteur

Management defined stress as a result of an individual's inability to cope with a positive or a negative condition that may result in illness, absenteeism, reduced production, low morale or product quality.

We felt that allowing workers some control over their job, such as with participative management, would have a definite effect on reducing work-related stress. Occasionally, however, more responsibility increases stress, but overall we felt that it would reduce it.

Electronic monitoring of work performance is becoming widespread in business as a means of streamlining procedures and increasing productivity. Management felt that this monitoring affects workers in a negative way.

We felt that work hazards and dangerous work situations contribute to stress, and that more information about job hazards would reduce it, but the information needs to be sufficient to have an effect. A little bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing; there has to be enough to assure the worker that s/he has full knowledge of the situation. We expect that full knowledge will reduce stress.

We felt that automation causes stress because the initial perception of most individuals is that automation will replace employees. In some cases that is true, and in others it is not. Automation usually does cause stress but the results of automation often reduce the level of risk to employees and sometimes reduce the frustrations of many of the menial tasks that employees have to do; so the results are likely to reduce stress. Automation is stressful because it creates some threat to our social status and our income.

We felt that the more employee involvement there is in the work organization and job design the more the stress would be reduced. Job design can reduce stress levels by eliminating or reducing noise, boredom, risk, and the like. Reducing those very fundamental hazards of the job through good design would reduce the amount of stress.

Management felt that everyone should be trained to recognize symptoms of stress. Today supervisors and management do not recognize the symptoms of stress, and neither do the employees. An employee may be experiencing migraine headaches, go home from work, and it is sort of passed over as a personal problem of that individual. We have to be more cognizant of the symptoms and the causes of stress. Management needs additional training to recognize the results of stress.

We felt that first-line supervisors have a very important role in using their training to liaise with employees and the EAP coordinator. Very often the EAP coordinator does not liaise with supervisors and supervisors may not have the awareness of stresses that they require.

We felt that EAPs and employee counselling have very important roles in stress management programs and that they can be very effective. We also felt that EAP programs should be designed to look at the causes of stress as well as the results. We are looking at re-establishing the criteria and the goals and objectives of the EAP programs.

Management felt that regarding compensation there should be specific criteria for stress to be developed by the medical profession. The criteria for stress should differentiate between day-to-day personal stress and workplace stress.

We also felt that the privacy of individuals cannot be totally protected if we are going to determine the causes of stress in a collective fashion. So, we have a conflict about whether or not we can really maintain that confidentiality and privacy when we look at paying compensation.

Our conclusions about stress in the workplace are: management must recognize stress as a problem; EAP programs must be able to deal with the causes of stress; and both the worker and management must be trained to recognize the causes.

Dan O'Connor

You said that everyone including management should be trained to recognize symptoms of stress; I suppose you meant workers as well. But I would say it is quite easy to recognize stress in most cases. Was there any resolve from the management group not only to recognize it but also to look at eliminating stress in the workplace? It is quite easy to have a seminar on recognizing it but how about some training for the workers and the first line managers who are on the floor to work to eliminate it? Was that addressed within your group?

Fred Nicholson

I think the goal is that once management recognizes the symptoms of stress and the causes of stress, it would be a natural follow-through to address them. We are looking at the underlying causes instead of the immediate causes. The symptoms of stress may be things like alcoholism, or drug abuse, or migraine headaches. We are looking at their causes. Once we can identify the causes of these symptoms of stress, we can work to eliminate or reduce them in the workplace.

Dan O'Connor

So your group agrees that once the training is in place to recognize stress it would naturally follow to engineer the problems as much as possible out of the workplace.

Lillian Vine

Dan, I heard job design, I heard team work, and I heard the causes of stress, rather than the symptoms that bring you to the breaking point, and I heard prevention--I think that was the commitment from the management group.

Dan O'Connor

You reported that the management group felt a worker should have sufficient knowledge of the hazards and conditions relating to a job; did you discuss full knowledge? You mention only sufficient knowledge.

Fred Nicholson

I believe our goal is to give them full knowledge so that we would reduce the stress. In our discussion there was some concern that knowledge can cause as much stress as it relieves. We agreed that insufficient knowledge leads to stress. We use the term "sufficient knowledge," you use "full knowledge"--I think we are talking about the same thing.

We also talked about participative management or group involvement in reducing stress as one of the major ways to reduce stress.

REPORT FROM LABOUR

Sandy Parise - Rapporteur

Stress is a health problem which can be brought on, or aggravated by the workplace. It affects workers both physically and emotionally through increased blood pressure, increased cholesterol, heart disease, ulcers; through symptoms such as agitation, worry, depression, insomnia, headaches, indigestion. There definitely is a relationship between stress and illness. And it impacts on morale, productivity and absenteeism, to name just a few.

Workers should have more control over the work processes; the amount of control a worker has over the job affects stress. Some methods of control should be achieved through negotiations such as better shift patterns and information about hazards in the work environment.

Stress levels are often increased by job automation, bringing on fears of losing one's job, speed up of a line, and other changes in the work environment. Stress levels would be decreased if the worker were allowed input into the design of the work environment.

People have to be made aware of the problem of stress, receive training to recognize stress in workers, and learn ways of controlling the stressors.

Confidentiality is a must in EAPs if they are to help individuals. Worker representation should be equal in any EAP to be effective. A worker may, in fact, prefer to go to a peer with a problem rather than to someone from management. Instead of stress management we would like to see some stress prevention.

There is no set policy to make stress compensable. It should be categorized under Section 3, Sub-section (iii), of the Workers' Compensation Act, "Disablement arising out of, and in the course of, employment." The only criterion should be that the worker has a disabling condition, causally related to the workplace that can be medically substantiated.

Section 77 of the Workers' Compensation Act needs to be amended to protect worker confidentiality. In 1915 the workers of this province made a bargain to trade the right to sue their employers for the right to no-fault compensation for injuries received during the course of work. Over the years, the Act has been amended many times to upgrade workers' coverage; in 1917 the Act was amended to include medical aid benefits; in 1926 asbestosis and silicosis were included as industrial diseases; in 1947 the Act was again amended to include industrial noise-induced hearing loss as an industrial disease; in 1963 the definition of an accident was changed to include a disablement arising out of, and in the course of, employment.

Surely with all the research and analysis that has been carried out over the years into chronic stress, there must now be sufficient evidence to warrant amending the Act and policies of the Workers' Compensation Board to include occupational stress as a compensable injury. Stress is a health problem.

We, as workers, have the right to a workplace that will not cripple us for life because of safety hazards. We, as workers, have the right to a workplace that will not shorten our lives due to carcinogen exposures. We, as workers, have the same right to a workplace that does not generate stress-related health problems such as ulcers, heart attacks or depression.

If we are unfortunate enough to be subjected to any of these conditions in our workplace, surely we, as workers, are entitled to compensation from a just system that affords not only economic security but allows us to retain our human dignity.

REPORT OF PROFESSIONALS

André Arsenault - Rapporteur

There is an interesting level of consensus and overlap in the positions of management, labour and professionals.

We defined stress in the work process, environment or situation to cover acute problems and chronic or job design problems. We did not attempt to define positive stress but, for the purpose of our discussions, chose to limit our definition to the stress which is harmful, which produces damage to individuals and groups, shortening life expectancy and good health--we emphasized the quality of life as well as longevity.

We feel that stress should be addressed in terms of "chronic" and "acute" because they correspond to different situations and call for different managerial and coping approaches.

We had some difficulty considering stress a direct causal factor of illness, but agreed it is one of the factors in a number of diseases and that a number of diseases are considered to be stress-related. From a professional and scientific point of view, it is difficult to establish a simple causal relationship between stress, disease and illness.

Workers' stress affects the workplace in ways such as absenteeism, low morale and turnover, labour/management conflicts, decreased performance, lateness. To prevent or reduce it, it is important to look not only at the symptoms of the individual, but at the effects at the group levels.

The level of control a worker has over the job is related to the degree of stress; lack of control increases stress. Electronic monitoring of work performance can be negative, except under certain circumstances where it might be useful for an individual who wants feedback on his/her performance to improve it. This is very different from mandatory monitoring which we feel is detrimental. Group monitoring may be effective if the intent is to streamline procedures and not solely to increase productivity at the expense of other considerations.

Knowledge of hazards also relates to stress; too much knowledge and knowledge without training can increase stress as can lack of knowledge. Increasing one's awareness without having any way to cope with the situation can be more stressful than helpful; knowledge should address not only the worker, but the work process itself.

Job automation without proper design generates stress; and so does work organization without meaningful and proper design. Communication and cooperation at all levels are crucial; design must include the participation of the worker so that stressful jobs are not designed without even the input of those most closely affected.

Job design can be used as a diagnostic tool to identify a process as stressful; it can also serve as a method to improve work organization and stress level.

Training to recognize stress is essential at all levels of the workplace and of the educational system. It would be a good investment, in the general educational system at the college and university levels, to increase awareness and recognition of stress. The prerequisite to training is commitment, primarily by decision-makers, to address stress.

You can monitor your workers' ability to handle stress on the job by teaching awareness of the manifestations of stress.

Employee assistance programs have a tendency to address needs at a tertiary level of prevention; that is, looking after people who have to deal with the consequences of stress. That will remain an important part of any stress management because in certain jobs you cannot eliminate stress (firefighters or policemen); it is an intrinsic part of the work.

EAPs will always have a role in stress management, but they could also be used to provide feedback to management and to unions leading to primary prevention. EAPs can be used to identify job design problems. At the same time, individual confidentiality has to be protected and maintained; that is essential. If EAPs become a way to pinpoint individuals complaining about the system, that kills the EAP program.

Confidentiality has to be intrinsically designed into the program so that workers are not exposed by the program. The design of an EAP is as important as having an EAP.

Other strategies that might be helpful are prevention, education, early intervention. I think it is important to establish informal channels of communication tailored to the needs of the organization.

If stress can be proven to be job related, it should be compensable. Problems in the workplace can flow back into personal life and vice versa. When you talk about unusual stress, like an accident or a very acute stressful situation, it is easy to say whether it happened in the workplace or not. Otherwise it is a difficult responsibility to impose the burden of defining the relative contributions of work and of personal life to professionals on a case-by-case basis. We propose to use a consensus mechanism where workers, management, scientists, and government would be represented. They would decide whether it is acceptable, on an incremental or progressive basis, to add a certain number of combinations of jobs and outcomes to the list of compensable diseases, relieving the burden of proof from the worker. It could be implemented gradually so as not to lose control of the whole process.

How can workplace stress be differentiated and separated from day-to-day stress? With regard to job stressors or stressors that are present on a continuous basis, it is very difficult to determine by monitoring individuals. But it is feasible and relatively easy when you do group monitoring or studies comparing with a control group. You can then recognize the stress in one job compared to another, and identify the components that are deficient.

The privacy of the worker should be protected by any means possible. If the privacy of the worker must be invaded in front of a tribunal because of proof requirements, such exposure should be protected by appropriate legal mechanisms.

Compensation is an exchange of rights; the worker gives up the right to sue the company for the benefit of no-fault compensation. If the privacy of the individual can be invaded, so should the privacy of corporations. Shareholders could be asked to come to the tribunal and explain their case--why they did not take this decision, or why did they not make that investment which could have changed the situation. This exchange of rights creates an environment where there is a case to actively protect the privacy of individuals as much as there is a case to protect the privacy of the corporate entity.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

Lillian Vine

Are there any questions or discussion?

Marilyn Martin - Canadian Automobile Workers' Union, Local 1915

Dr Arsenault, you said that job design can be used as a diagnostic tool and as a method to improve work organization and design. Was there any discussion in your group about involving the worker in job design?

André Arsenault

There should be open channels of communication to make sure that there is feedback between the workplace and those who decide on the job design. There is a consensus that the workers should be involved and participate in the diagnosis, and they should be involved in redesign.

Jim Stewart -United Steelworkers of America, Local 1005

If you look at the list of participants you see that some of the professionals are employed by management. The report is excellent; the combination of efforts is excellent. But maybe it would have been more acceptable to have separate reports from management and government; there could be the perception of a bit of conflict of interest.

André Arsenault

I think it is a very important issue; it can impair the credibility of professionals. Even if one is considered an expert, who pays the expert may be seen to define where s/he stands.

But on the other hand, I still favour a cooperative approach, trying to reach consensus no matter who is paying the professionals.

It is very difficult to find professionals who are not paid by someone.

Lillian Vine

I have no doubt that all of the professionals here understand exactly what you are saying. What makes our workshops so exciting to me, and to a lot of others and I hope to you, is that there is so much similarity between your reports. You spent yesterday discussing these issues together. You were labour, you were management, you were professional, you were government, but you were people no matter who paid you. You were very open and you shared opinions, you shared experiences with each other.

Then today you came to conclusions within your own group. What I heard this morning was a report from management that sounded as though it could easily have been from labour--labour had to have some control; information to workers was vital; labour had to have influence and be involved in job design; good job design was extremely important.

There has to be training, not only for management or supervisors, but for the workers to recognize the stresses that they were suffering. Management had to recognize the results of stress, and the causes of stress.

EAPs were important, but they should not deal only with the immediate problem that brought the person there, but also with the causes of the stress so that they could be prevented or reduced.

There is some divergence of opinion on how well you can protect confidentiality and really get into prevention programs and compensation programs. Everybody feels you must, but somehow information must be shared. I thought the professionals had a very interesting approach: if confidentiality cannot be completely guaranteed to the worker then neither should it be guaranteed to the company; everything is on the table; you see the whole picture instead of a piece of the picture. Then compensation is really no-fault and there is an exchange of rights.

Workers recommended the same solutions to the same problems--they also wanted control; they also wanted representation on employee assistance programs, their design and how the information flows from them. They wanted stress prevention rather than stress management. Many workplaces have programs that teach you how to breathe slowly and deeply when you are already shaken up; but what you are all looking for is how to prevent the stress and the low morale and the absenteeism and the "boulot manie." EAPs should be designed to address needs, not at a tertiary level only, but at a primary level of prevention.

The professionals were very much in accord. They made several points, one of which was that knowledge without training can be stressful. Workers are now entitled to all kinds of information, but the world is drowning in information and starving for knowledge. It may well be that people are getting a lot of information they do not understand and this can be extremely stressful. Our own work at CCOHS is exactly directed to providing knowledge by presenting understandable, trustworthy information.

An interesting issue I heard discussed in one of the groups that was not reported concerned training for supervisors who one day were workers and the next day were supervising workers; that brings stress on both those who used to be workmates who are now the supervised, and on the supervisor who used to be the workmate, and is now supervising people who were his peers. There was a very strong suggestion that a lengthy orientation period for the newly-appointed supervisor--a breathing space to convert to the new role could reduce stress and improve productivity.

There are managers who are trained in MBA programs; there are managers being trained in other programs; but very often managers become managers overnight and do not know many of the things that they should. The educational system has often, in our workshops, been called on to be involved.

The professionals stressed the importance of informal means of communication. They also had an extremely interesting idea on compensation. Stress is a subjective thing; you did not come up with any measurements but you agreed that there should be criteria. You set a basis for some design for criteria, which I think will be very important.

The words that I heard throughout are prevention, education and training, and early intervention.

Al Bieksa

Dr Arsenault, I cannot understand what you meant by the trade-off between worker confidentiality and employer confidentiality. Can you explain that in more detail?

André Arsenault

If a case is debated in front of an administrative tribunal for compensation purposes where private information can be brought as proof of relationship or cause or involvement on the worker's side, the equivalent on the side of the corporation would be to make public the discussions and decisions that have been taken in the privacy of the assembly of shareholders or the Board of Directors. That is an exchange of rights.

Privacy should be protected by all means, but if it becomes necessary to make certain information accessible, such access should be protected by due process of law and guarantees should be given. The group consensus is that individual privacy has to be protected because it is part of the exchange of rights between union and management under the compensation scheme.

Al Bieksa

Are you saying that this employer information should be released to the employee, or just to the board? Under Section 81 of Workers' Compensation Act, the Board already has that power to all the access they want from the employer.

Yet in Section 77, the employer has the right of access to all medical files on the worker, and the worker does not have any recourse to get information from the employers.

Labour is concerned that there is too much accessibility by the employer to the employee's medical documents, and that is what we want amended.

André Arsenault

In Quebec I think the situation might be a little different. At one point, there was much information coming from conflicting medical advice and files coming to the court, and now they are in the process of changing the law so that the only parties involved are the worker and his/her treating physician.

But there might be some differences in the provincial legislation and the procedures. In Quebec, the Board only has to increase the weight of the burden of the proof to block the process completely. They have been saving 20% in immediate costs just by doing that. But they have this huge backlog in contestation procedures at various levels of appeal, which means that the money may not have been spent this year, but it has not been saved.

So control over the bureaucracies that implement the procedures are very important, too. Participation of union and management in the implementation of such procedures is very important. This is difficult because bureaucrats have a tendency to exclude the parties from the consultative process even though the Board is tripartite. Very often neither party has access to the information with regard to how procedures are designed, what the procedures are, and how they are implemented. They are then stuck with the consequences one, two, or three years down the line, and then everybody is mad--management is mad, the unions are mad.

Lillian Vine

This sounds like a topic that itself needs a great deal more discussion than we can achieve today.

I would like to end this workshop by giving thanks, much too briefly as always, to a lot of people. I would like to sincerely thank our speakers: Christian Millet, who was also one of the requesters, Steven Bottaro and Glenn MacNaughton, Greg Hogan, and André Arsenault. You were interesting and your presentations stimulated much discussion.

I would like to thank Paulette Sherwood, Fred Nicholson, Dan O'Connor, for chairing the work groups at very little notice--you did a super job. And the rapporteurs, André Arsenault, Sandy Parise and Fred Nicholson, who also did a super job. And I would like to thank all of you, because without you this process just cannot happen, you make it work.

So thank you very much, it has been another terrific experience. I thoroughly enjoy holding the workshops as much as I enjoy organizing them--I hope you too have thoroughly enjoyed being here and working together.

I want to thank you for your support of CCOHS. It makes us all feel good and particularly so in these difficult times.

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